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C O N F I D E N T I A L

MEMORANDUM FOR:

25X1

Chief, Legislation Division,
Office of Legislative Counsel

FROM:

Eloise R. Page
Chief, Policy and Coordination Staff

SUBJECT:

Unauthorized Disclosures of CIA
Personnel by Former CIA Employees

REFERENCE:

Senator Bentsen's Letter of 1 March 1979
to the Director of Central Intelligence

1. Operations Directorate comments are attached for OLC use in preparing the Director's response to Reference inquiry. As requested, our comments concern damage incurred as a result of identification of current CIA personnel by former CIA employees; our assessment of the seriousness of such disclosures; and our views on the need for remedial legislation. For security reasons, we have neither confirmed nor denied specific instances of alleged identification of CIA personnel or the impact of such disclosures in specific geographical areas. Consistent with Senator Bentsen's intended use of this information, our comments are unclassified.

2. Damage incurred by CIA from unauthorized disclosures by former employees has been substantial. We wish to support the possibility of statutory relief from such damage.

3. Although our personnel are more subject to violence as a result of exposure, we cannot document a case of physical harm to CIA personnel as a direct result of unauthorized disclosure of identities by former Agency employees.

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4. All portions of this document are Confidential.



Eloise R. Page

Attachment: a/s

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PCS/ [redacted] (2 April 1979)

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C O N F I D E N T I A L

1. Unauthorized disclosure by official recipients of privileged information concerning CIA personnel, sources, and activities has severely damaged the Agency's ability to perform its assigned national intelligence mission. Such disclosure has been extensive. It has occurred from a variety of sources in the Executive Branch and Congress. Among the most damaging disclosures have been those identifying CIA personnel. Of these, most have been made by former employees of CIA itself.

2. Unauthorized disclosure of identities has had direct and adverse effects upon the professional effectiveness of U.S. intelligence personnel, their personal safety, and that of their families assigned abroad. It has severely damaged this nation's credibility in relationships with essential foreign sources of intelligence, who are appalled and endangered by the seeming inability of official America to keep a secret. Although the 1947 National Security Act, the 1949 Central Intelligence Agency Act, and Executive Orders 11905 and 12036 charge the Director of Central Intelligence with responsibility to protect intelligence sources and methods, neither he nor the courts have effective means for doing so except in cases of provable espionage on behalf of a foreign power. The net result is a damaged national intelligence capability directly reflected in reduced national security.

3. A growing number of former CIA employees has made and is making unauthorized disclosures. Leading the list is Philip Agee, who has published the names of some 1,200 alleged CIA personnel and whose most recent book, "Dirty Work", purports to identify over 700 past and current CIA employees in Europe alone. Other disgruntled former employees who have exposed Agency personnel and operations are Victor Marchetti ("The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence"), John Stockwell ("In Search of Enemies"), and Frank Snepp ("Decent Interval"). Even former employees friendly to the Agency, e.g. former Director William Colby ("Honorable Men"), have made revelations harmful to our operations. That these disclosures have been made with relative impunity and commercial success encourages continuation and expansion of such destructive activity.

4. Security considerations preclude our confirming or denying specific instances of alleged identification of CIA personnel. A substantial number of such allegations by former employees has been accurate. The varied and wide-ranging destructive effects of these identifications include the following:

a. Impaired relations with foreign sources of intelligence:

- Virtually all covert sources of this Agency have evinced increased concern for their own safety as a result of unauthorized U.S. disclosures. A considerable number of reporting sources and others approaching cooperation have terminated or reduced their contact with us as a direct result of such disclosures. One Bloc source, citing "the failure of the American system" to recognize the importance and necessity of secrecy in national security matters, questioned how the U.S. Government could expect foreigners to provide information in view of continuing exposures within the U.S. itself that jeopardize the careers and lives of sources.

- Nearly all major intelligence liaison services worldwide have undertaken reviews of their relations with the Agency as a result of U.S. disclosures. One of our closest liaison partners refers to situations producing such disclosures as "the American sickness". Results have included restriction of contact, reluctance to engage in joint operations, and reduced passage of information. In taking these actions, several liaison services have explicitly cited disclosures by former CIA employees.

- One CIA operating division has stated, "For those who want to read the message, it is simple: if our officers cannot protect themselves from exposure, how can they safeguard those individuals and services who cooperate with us?" The impact upon the Agency's ability to collect positive and counterintelligence has been substantial. The impact upon some of our foreign sources, who must remain in place, has been grave.

b. Reduced effectiveness of intelligence personnel and operations:

- CIA operations officers identified through unauthorized disclosures by former colleagues are at least as severely compromised as those identified by a hostile foreign source. The former colleague is correctly viewed as an authoritative "inside" source and usually cites ideals of public service as his motive.

- The professional effectiveness of officers so compromised is substantially and sometimes irreparably damaged. They must reduce or break contact with sensitive covert sources. Continued activity must be with increased defensive measures

that are inevitably more costly and time-consuming . Some must be removed from their assignments and returned from overseas at substantial cost. Years of area experience and irreplaceable linguistic skill are lost. Reassignment mobility of the compromised officer is impaired. Ambassadors are sometimes reluctant to approve their nominations for fear of political embarrassment or physical danger. Assignment to sensitive posts abroad is precluded. As a result, the pool of experienced CIA officers is being reduced. Especially in comparison with our adversaries, we are not a large organization. Such losses are felt deeply.

- Replacement of officers thus compromised is difficult and, in some cases, impossible. In small U.S. installations abroad, the position formerly filled by the compromised officer is itself compromised. The career hazards of such compromise, especially when it occurs early in the officer's career, has impaired the Agency's ability to recruit qualified personnel for operational assignments.

- Counterintelligence analysis by adversary services traces the careers of exposed officers through previous assignments and produces an expanded pattern of compromise through association. Such exposures also sensitize political opposition elements, hostile security services, and foreign populations to the CIA presence, making our function far more difficult.

c. Increased danger to personnel:

- Given the presence of terrorist or violence-prone organizations in many countries, CIA officers publicly identified are subject to harrassment and substantial danger of injury or death.

- Perhaps most insidious is the effect of exposure on intelligence officers' families. For example, Philip Agee's book, "Dirty Work", in some cases fully identifies officers' wives, making them potential targets in their own right. As terrorism escalates, there will be little concern on the part of terrorist groups if wives, children, or innocent bystanders fall victim in attempts to get at officers.

5. There is need for an effective statutory basis to discourage unauthorized disclosures and to punish them when they occur. It is also needed to give credibility to the United States' position in relationships with foreign liaison services and agent sources. As it now stands, the ability of U.S. citizens intentionally to expose covert intelligence personnel and to do so with impunity implies a governmental position of neutrality in the matter. It suggests that U.S. intelligence officers are "fair game" for those members of their own society who take issue with the existence of CIA or find other motives for making unauthorized disclosures. Statutory restriction of such action is important to United States retention of an effective foreign intelligence service.

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